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GERMAN LABOUR SERVICE

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The first task which the German Labour Service aims at accomplishing is to unite the youth of the nation into a real community, irrespective of class distinction. The barriers which have divided class from class and creed from creed are excluded from the comradeship of the Labour Service. These young men are not guided by any selfish ambitions or interests. Each one of them seeks only to serve the good of the whole. Without any pay for his labour, he takes the spade in his hand to improve the soil of Germany and thereby enhance the sources of national production. Sons of miners, civil servants, professors and farmers work together, shoulder to shoulder, and thus learn the practical significance of the words Nation and Socialism. And no matter to what position in life they return, they bring with them a clear consciousness of the truth that work is not only a means of earning money but is the moral basis of national life. By working in the Labour Service the youth of the nation is brought to realize the fact that work is a noble thing no matter what form it takes.

The second task before the Labour Service is its share in the work of freeing Germany from the necessity of importing food supplies. When the programme allotted to the Labour Service for the next twenty years is fully carried out, Germany will have gained a new province, represented by the reclaimed land. And all this will be achieved through peaceful effort. Therewith Germany will be assured of sufficient home produce to feed her whole population. Broad expanses of marsh and moorland will be reclaimed through strenuous labour. Dykes will be built and good arable land will be won from the sea. Farms will be established and the saying of Frederick the Great will be verified: „Whoever produces two ears of grain where only one was formerly produced will render a greater service to his country than the Field Marshall who wins a great battle."



„Unser Lager und die Fahnen sind die neue Zeit..."

The history of the German Labour Service shows the development of a movement which from the very beginning had to struggle with and overcome indifference and misunderstanding. Every step forward has involved an indomitable effort to carry the main idea into effect. The first Labour Camps arose within the German Youth Movement in the years following the war. During the period when unemployment was at its highest, from 1929 to 1932, the movement expanded but at the same time it became disrupted and internally disunited. It was only after 1933 that the movement was gradually brought under unified control. Then it was systematically organised on a permanent basis and recognised as a national institution.

Young students, workers and peasants established individual labour camps soon after the war. These camps were an evidence of the spirit which urged these young people to find work for themselves and go back to the cultivation of the land. At the same time, however, the exodus from the land continued, leading to an increase in the urban population and simultaneously to a rise in the number of unemployed. The German National Socialist Labour Party was the first political party to adopt the principles of the Youth Movement, and as early as 1928 they brought a motion before the Reichstag for the introduction of a universal Labour Service. This motion was unfavourably received by the Government in power at that time. But the movement went forward nevertheless. In 1930 Adolf Hitler and Konstantin Hierl, who at that time was entrusted with organising the Labour Service within the National Socialist Party, drew up a definite set of regulations which, in their fundamental outline in regard to aim and purpose, are still in force today. At that time Hierl wrote: „Labour Service signifies something different, something greater than a temporary measure arising from the distress of the time for the purpose of combating unemployment. The idea of compulsory labour service is a logical development and fulfilment of the idea embodied in compulsory education and national military service. Every German must work for his country and fight for the defence of his country. Compulsory labour service must become a duty of honour for German youth in the service of the nation. Its purpose must not be to supply cheap labour for private enterprise and it must not become a competitive undertaking carried on by the State for the purpose of forcing down the level of wages. Through the compulsory Labour Service the National Government will have at its disposal a working army that will carry out great public works to serve the economic interests of the nation, as well as its cultural and other public interests."

Confronted with the constantly increasing unemployment and the resulting distressing moral and social conditions the Government, in 1931, enacted the first measures for the establishment and promotion of a voluntary labour service under the supervision of the Government. But these measures did not have any clearly defined end in view, and above all they did not aim at training youth in the duties of citizenship. Political denominational and social groups and associations formed their own labour camps which were organised in accordance with their respective principles. There was a total absence of uniformity in the policy and administration of the movement. One section of those who inscribed their names in this voluntary labour service spent the nights at their homes and were with their comrades only while working together during the day in other cases the volunteer workers lived and slept in the labour camps. The management and upkeep of this voluntary labour service were placed in the hands of the Reich Labour Exchange and Unemployment Insurance Office. This institution maintained these camps as a temporary emergency measure to provide occupation for the unemployed youth and others who had a right to the Government dole. The law provided the only subsidiary work was to be undertaken by the voluntary labour service. This provision was interpreted in a wide am varied sense. One group held that the construction of cycle paths along the roadsides and the laying out of parks were in keeping with the ends

which the labour service measure had in view. Another group worked on capitalistic principles at piece-work wages. The third group replaced at cheap rates the labourers who were on strike. Still the movement developed. The number of those inscribed in the voluntary service was 6 810 in December 1931; but twelve months later it had risen 241 766.



REICH LABOUR LEADER KONSTANTIN HIERL

The definite policy which was adopted by the Hitler Cabinet in 1933 made it possible to unify and lay down clear lines for the future development of Labour Service. Within the framework of the voluntary labour service Colonel Hierl had established camps for the purpose of training an expert body of leaders. In a systematic and practical way he had built up an efficient staff and in cooperation with this staff of co-workers he was able to carry out his plans for a subsequent labour service on a compulsory basis. In 1933 Hierl was entrusted with the organisation of the compulsory labour service and appointed „Staatssekretär" for that purpose at the Labour Ministry. His first task was to create a unified organisation from the heterogeneous groups with their respective enactments, laws and regulations, which confronted him on taking over control. A common uniform was adopted for all men in the Labour Service. The Reich was divided into thirty labour service regions. The Labour Service became an autonomous institution of the State. At the 1934 Party Congress, in Nürnberg, 52 000 members of the Labour Service marched by, shouldering flittering spades and thus bearing witness to the new spirit and shape of the organisation. The systematic work done by the Reich Labour Leader Hierl found its recognition and consummation in the Law of June 26, 1935, in virtue of which compulsory labour service replaced the voluntary movement. The first paragraph of the Labour Service Law runs thus: —

„National Labour Service is a service of honour to the German Reich. All young people, of both sexes, are obliged to serve their country in the National Labour Service. The function of this Service is to inculcate in the German youth a communal spirit and a true concept of the dignity of work, and above all, a proper respect for manual labour. To the National Labour Service is allotted the task of carrying out work for the good of the whole community."



In this spirit the first detachment of recruits came into camp on October 1, 1935, to do labour service for a period of six months. The transformation from the voluntary to the compulsory system was carried through smoothly and without the slightest difficulties.

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According to the enactments at present in force all young men from the age of 18 to 25 are subject to the obligatory service. The period of service is six months. During the years 1935/36 the average number of those enrolled for the labour service was 200 000. By 1939 this number will have increased to 300 000 inclusive of staff. For young women the voluntary system is still in force, the work allotted to them being such as is suitably for women. However the principle of obligatory female labour service was laid down in the law of 1935 and plans were made for the practical extension of the law to young women. In 1936 the number of young women taking part in the labour service reached 10 000. For 1937 the total is 15 000 and this will be increased to 30 000 in 1938. Labour service for young women will be extended year by year until a system of general compulsory service can be put into operation.

The Reich Directorate of the Labour Service, under the guidance of *Reichsarbeitsführer, Reichsleiter* Konstantin Hierl, is the principal ruling body in the Labour Service. It is divided into eight sections: —

1. Service Section. (Organisation, registration, section for foreign a Hairs etc.)
2. Staff Office. (For matters concerning the staff of the Labour Service Leaders.)
3. Planning Office. (Planning, financing and technical matters).
4. Education and Training. (Instruction, sport and utilization of leisure time.)
5. Administration and Business Office. (Budget, salaries, clothing, maintenance.)
6. Office of Health. (Health and medical services.)
7. Judicial Administration. (Breaches of conduct, courts of honour etc.)
8. Press Section. (Press, films, wireless.)

By an Order issued on January 30, 1937, the Reich Labour Leader was empowered to deal with all questions concerning Labour service. In course of time the Reich Labour Service was detached from the Reich Labour Ministry and subordinated to the Minister of the Interior. In contrast with other countries labour service in Germany comes within the scope of internal administration.

As has been said, the whole territory of the Reich has been divided into 30 regions as the territorial basis for the organisation of the Labour Service. Varying with its size, each region has from four to eight Labour Service groups and each group is made up of from five to ten camps. Thus the Labour Service is uniformly organised throughout the whole Reich. In the spring of 1937 there is a total of 192 groups, comprising 1310 camps. Each camp consists of about 200 young men. In 1939 there will then be 1430 camps.

The leadership of the 30 Labour Service regions is directly subordinate to the authority of the Reich Labour Leader. Under his supervision and control are also the thirteen district leaders of the Labour Service for young women, the Labour Service schools, the Reich school

for the training of leaders to fill the higher posts in the organisation, the great number of Labour Service schools for sectional leaders, field masters, squad leaders also the Labour Service schools for young women, which consist of one Reich school and several district schools.

The enrolment, grouping and finally the discharge of the Labour Service men every spring and autumn is effected through 32 chief registration offices and 276 branch offices.

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The necessary financial support for the former voluntary labour service came from the funds of the Reich and the Reid Labour Exchange and unemployment Insurance Office. The Reich set aside a sum of 1,70 to 2,00 Reichsmarks per day for the maintenance of each volunteer. On April 1, 1934, the Reich took over the whole financial responsibility for the Labour Service and 200 million Reichsmarks were set aside for that purpose in the annual budget. All expenditure incurred by the Reich Labour Service is met out of this sum. Daily board for each service man is chargeable at about 80 pfennigs. Further, complete equipment and all necessities such as cycles etc. are purchased out of this sum and placed free of charge at the disposal of the men. Every man receives 25 pfennigs pocket money per day. The budget sum furthermore provides for the salaries of the entire staff, administration expenses, maintenance of schools, and medical expenses for those who fall ill while in the service.

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Rhythm of Work

The organisation of the Labour Service is based on the leadership principle. This means that each leader who is placed at the head of a group or camp, is personally responsible for the physical, mental and spiritual welfare of the body of workers entrusted to his care, and also for their working efficiency, their training and education.

The task of picking out those men who are capable of becoming leaders begins as soon as the recruits start actual work. The principle is that the road to leadership is open to every boy who shoulders a spade in the Labour Service. There is no necessity for supplementary financial assistance from home. Those who have passed only through the elementary schools may also enter as candidates for the school for leadership after they have passed a special examination. The most important qualifications are personality, efficiency and practical loyalty to the present political regime. A leader in the Labour Service is expected to set a model example to his squad in his general conduct and way of living. His life must be inspired and guided by the principles of National Socialism. He must have a keen consciousness of his responsibility, be upright, and his moral life must be beyond reproach. The young leader must show cool-headed judgment and a certain maturity of outlook, while the older leader must be young in heart and able to mingle as a companion with the young. In all the small routine duties of everyday life in camp the leader must always act in a spirit of comradeship and helpfulness.

In accordance with the new legislation, the career of a leader in the Labour Service is looked upon as more or less parallel to that of the civil servant or the military officer; the permanent personnel of the Labour Service are regular government officials. The same is true of all those who are employed in the executive administration of the Labour Service. The Law of December 13, 1935, lays down the scale of salaries for these officials.

A subsequent Law regulates the question of staff member: who fall ill and become unfit for work. A further Law, fundamentally the same as the Civil Servants Law, regulates condition: for all staff members leaving the labour service. And the same Law regulates the conditions under which the members of the permanent personnel may leave service, the right to a pension being acquired after they have reached the age of 27.

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In the Labour Service camps the average working day is spent as follows:

Reveille in summer at 5 a.m. In winter at 6 a.m. Ten minute: of physical exercises follow. The men have then one hour for washing, dressing, bed-making, clean-up and early breakfast. Flag parade follows and the camp leader issues instructions for the day.

The day’s work takes up seven hours and includes the time taken for marching to and from work and also thirty minutes for breakfast.

Dinner in summer is served at 1:30 p.m. and in winter a 2:30 p.m. In summer an hour’s rest is taken after dinner. The afternoons are exclusively devoted to bodily and mental training of all service men. Sports, games and marching exercises are carried out on alternate days and last one hour.

After that, daily instruction is given in home politics, German history, current topical political problems and all subjects of interest to the Labour Service.

Brief orders are issued at 7 p.m. after which supper is served for all in the camp common room.

The evening hours of leisure then begin and twice weekly all service men join in community singing, attendance at lectures, cinemas etc. Camp tattoo and lights-out at 10 p.m.

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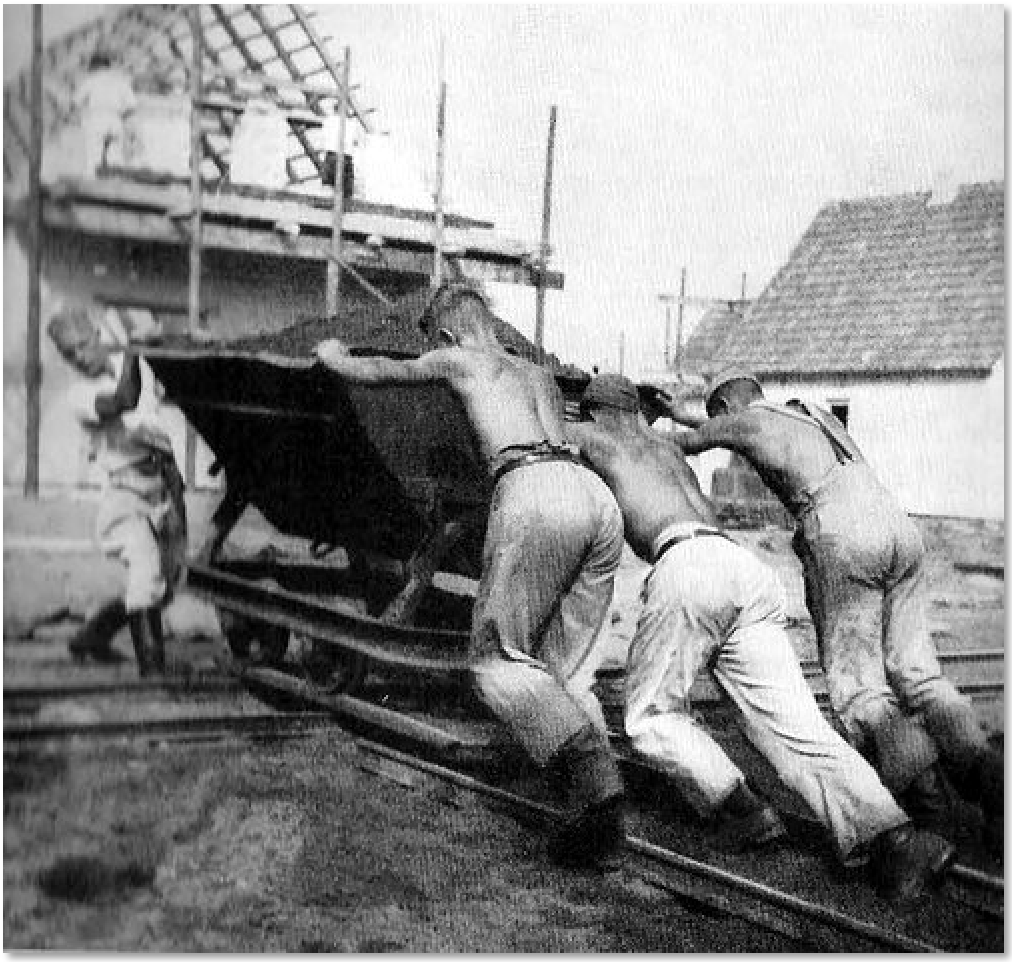
Headquarters of the German Labour Service, Berlin

In 1932 Konstantin Hierl wrote ‘‘Labour Service must guard our youth against physical and moral slovenliness. The young German will receive a very valuable preparation for life through physical training, the cultivation of industrious habits, order, punctuality, cleanliness, self-control, and obedience. The Labour Service school must give the youth of our nation the necessary civic training by inculcating a sense of duty and honour towards the nation and a feeling of social responsibility towards the community.”

The routine of camp life and the regular daily work, which are conducted on principles of obedience and comradeship, are in themselves such that they help towards the fulfilment of the task. Besides this special training in the duties and responsibilities of citizenship is given. The educational programme followed in the camp does not include useless knowledge. It chief feature is that the common life in the camp helps the young labour recruit to come into

actual touch with the nation as whole. Lectures are given which will help the young man to understand the principal turning-points in the national life of the people, and to become acquainted with the great personalities in German history. Folklore as well as questions relative to frontier and foreign problems, economic questions, the significance attached to hereditary health - all these themes are dealt with in popular lectures which make the subject matter easily understood by the average layman. Love of the homeland and of its natural features is awakened in such a manner that the community life in camp and at work is made the means of intimately experiencing the beauty of the surroundings.

The utilization of spare time after work and on Sunday fulfils the same purpose. Music and folk songs are practised books are read, country customs are studied. The various groups such as community singers and speakers, amateur theatrical performers vie with each other in giving entertainment.



Preparing the Ground for new Settlements

Trilling the soil is an excellent form of bodily exercise. When young men are trained for it and when it is properly carried out, it becomes an important factor which supplements and completes the athletic training. Such bodily exercise also develops the character, by promoting the habit of decisiveness and mastery of self, training the young man to be hard with himself and ready to help others. The athletic sports which are practised during the period of Labour Service also help to develop in these young workers the proper idea of coordination and subordination. The important aim is not the creation of records but rather a good average achievement on the part of each working team. For the regular exercises aim at

bringing each unit of workers to a general level of efficiency such as may be recognised by the average outside observer.



The new Generation at Work

The work which Konstantin Hierl has done, and the great aim of the Labour Service, has often been publicly acknowledged by Adolf Hitler, the Chancellor of the Reich. He has declared that the Labour Service is the school through which the whole nation must pass. „Through the Labour Service” he says, „we would make every young German contribute by the work of his hands towards the building up of the nation. We especially want to make it obligatory for those Germans who are engaged in positions where they do not do a manual work, to experience what manual labour is, so that thereby they may come to understand the problems of their fellow countrymen whose daily toil is on farms or in factories and workshops. We shall abolish for ever that attitude of superiority which unfortunately so many of our intellectuals think they ought to adopt towards manual labour. And instead of this feeling of superiority we wish to strengthen in them the feeling of self-confidence, which would naturally arise from the consciousness that they also are able to employ their bodily strength in productive labour. But our ulterior aim here is to develop mutual understanding between the various classes and thus strengthen the bond of union in the folk community. We want the various classes to come to know one another, so that in this way we may gradually lay down the most natural of all foundations for a real community spirit.”

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A united Effort overcomes all Obstacles

The economic importance of the Labour Service is indicated by the following figures:—

1. Through the Treaty of Versailles Germany lost - besides its colonies – 9,5% of its population and 13,5% of its territory. This lost territorial area was highly productive. Thus Germany, which is one of the most densely populated countries in the world, lost a greater proportion of its soil than of its population.

2. Between the years 1929 and 1932 the value of the average annual import of foodstuffs into Germany was 2 750 million Reichsmarks. These imports came from countries in which Germany was able to sell her own exports only to the extent of one-third of the above sum.

3. If the cultivation of the national soil were carried out according to a systematic plan, it would be possible to raise the agricultural productivity of the country by an annual margin equal in value to 2000 million Reichsmarks. Germany would thus be rendered almost independent of foreign markets for the import of her foodstuffs.

In 1764, when Prussia was a poor country, Frederick the Great said: „The worse the condition of the country is, the more necessary is the improvement of it.” By indefatigable labour he carried through a work of colonization which still bears witness to the spirit of that time. Since then no important larger scale plans were undertaken for the improvement of the German soil. And this was so, not because there was no more to be done in that sphere, but rather because the attention of the nation was distracted and turned towards other aims, especially the industrialization which developed during the nineteenth century.

And so it happens that today we have to begin where Frederick the Great left off. The aim which we have to keep steadily before our eyes during this work is to provide new farm land, because this newly reclaimed land can be utilized to the full only by settling farming families on it. The great settlement work, the internal colonization, which Frederick the Great carried through in his time, in order to provide for his soldiers and extend the population into those districts which hitherto had only been thinly populated - this work of turning waste spaces into fertile land has remained up to our day just where the colonization of that time left off.

The task of improving the soil, which now lies before us exceeds in scope all that which has been done since the time of Frederick the Great up till today. According to the estimate made by the Reich Agricultural Estate, there is an acreage of 20 million acres that has to be drained. This amounts to one-third of the whole German territory at present under cultivation. There are about 5 million acres of uncultivated moor land and about 3 million acres of waste land of which about half can be turned to use. There are furthermore 12,5 million acres of arid soil that need to be irrigated. There are another 12,5 million acres which is so divided up, especially in West and South Germany, that the economic value of it is very much reduced. This land has to be re-distributed into farming units on rational principles of agricultural economy. A further 2,5 million acres can be added for land to be reclaimed by means of protective measures against floods and another 1,25 million acres in the coastal districts as the result of dyke work.

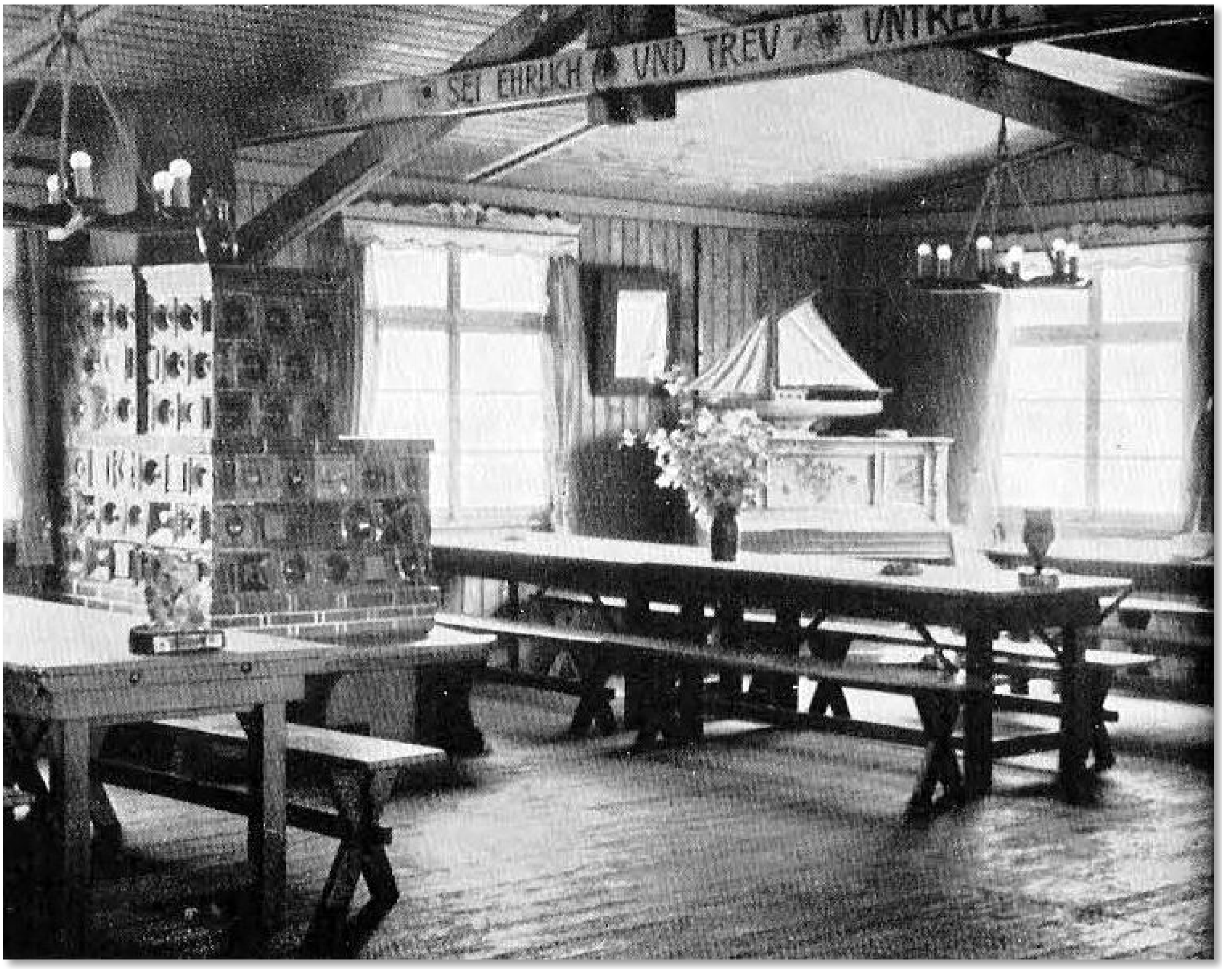


Drainage Construction

The magnitude of this economic undertaking, the essential portion of which is to be carried out by the Labour Service, is once again made clear when we bear in mind the fact that the agricultural area of Germany now in use will be increased by one-tenth through the reclamation of moorland and waste areas alone, - that the production of one third of the land now in use will be increased by 20% through the proper regulation of water, and a sixth of the same area will be improved by margin of 20 % in its productive value as a result of being redistributed according to a systematic economic plan. Therefore taking all together, the agricultural produce of the whole territory of the Reich will be increased by one-sixth as a result of land reclamation and land improvement schemes.

It took a long span of years before this imperative task of internal colonization became recognised. Then in the Labour Service Law of 1935 it was acknowledged and set forth in a few brief words: „The Reich Labour Service carries out work which is for the common good". Thus the German youth will set to work, not to serve private capitalistic ends, but to improve the conditions of life for the national community as a whole and for future generations.

In order to have the Labour Service produce the best possible results in a systematic way, the Reich Labour Leader has established a special section for planning out the work. Here each individual scheme is carefully studied and so arranged as to fit in with the general work. Plans are compared, results already obtained are studied, and the general scheme of work to be carried out by the Labour Service is settled ahead of time for years and decades to come.



A homely, self-made Dining Room



The Day's Work is over

The following are the results which the Labour Service can show for its work from 1933 to 1936:—

About 300 000 acres of marsh and sea-swamp have been reclaimed and secured against flooding, through the building of dykes and the regulation of waterways. Thus the crops and the farmland itself are safely protected against damages from high tides or the flooding of inland streams.

About 750 000 acres of watery soil have been improved by regulating the beds of the various streams and carrying out a system of internal drainage. Thus the fertility of land which hitherto was only very poor for cultivation purposes was immediately improved, or at least this transformation has established the necessary prerequisite condition for the better agricultural utilization of these lands.

About 150 000 acres have been rendered arable by digging out roots etc. and dividing up the land into farming units.

About 120 000 acres of land which had been split up into small holdings through the custom of dividing paternal estates among the children, have been joined together and redistributed in such a way that they can be farmed in a manner which will give profitable results. In making these farms new roads have been opened up and drainage has been carried out where necessary, so as to make intensive cultivation possible.

About 400,000 acres of cultivated land were made more accessible by means of country roads, thus effecting a saving in working costs.

Together with the work of reclaiming and improving agricultural land, the Labour Service also carries on afforestation work, plant nursery and horticulture work, the opening up of forest tracks for transporting lumber, as well as assisting in the work of establishing rural and city suburban settlements by doing groundwork, road levelling and construction. In this way the cost of such settlements is kept as low as possible. The Labour Service does not however assist in actually building the houses.

The increase in agricultural produce resulting from this work has reached the annual value of 50 million Reichsmarks, which is equal to the whole produce of a district as large as that of the Saar.

From 1933 to 1936 70% of all the work done was in the reclamation and improvement of land for agricultural purposes, 15% in afforestation, and the remaining 15% in preparatory work for the establishment of farm settlements assistance at forest fires, overflowing of dykes and other catastrophes.

The following table gives examples of the work which was done during the year 1936, and the manner in which it was divided among the Labour Service camps: —

Place	Area affected (in acres)	No. of camps at work	Class of Work
Large Moor near Tilsit (East Prussia)	12 120	4	Erection of protective works against floods, drainage and moor cultivation to create land for about 350 settlers
Near Elbing (East Prussia)	5 670	4	Drainage and cultivation to create land for 88 settlers
Pomerania	19 800	14	Improvement of soil and the building of farm roads to assist peasants already settled
West Pomerania Usedom and Wollin	16 100	7	Land reclamation by erection of dykes and cultivation of moors for settling 50 settlers
Spreewald near Kottbus	14 850	5	Erection of dykes and drainage to ensure and increase production on agricultural and forest land
Brandenburg, Rhinluch	215 000	11	Protection against floods and cultivation of moor to create land for 150 settlers
Lower Silesia, along the River Sprotte	14 850	9	Protection against floods and cultivation of moor land to settle 150 peasants
Drömling near Magdeburg	60 000	7	Moor cultivation to increase production on land of 450 settlers

Near Merseburg, south of Halle	12 500	8	Regulation of Rivers Elster, Luppe and Aue, to avoid flooding
River Niers, west of Krefeld	24 800	5	Regulation of river to create land for settlers
Hunsrück mountains South of Moselle	24 800	13	The cultivation of waste land and the preparation of soil to assist local peasants
Westerwald, on the right bank of Rhine, near Koblenz	148 500	12	Preparation of soil and cultivation of waste land to assist peasants
Hessian marshes, between Main and Necklar	74 250	9	Draining and preparation of soil to create land for 120 settlers
North of Karlsruhe	39 800	16	Protection against flood and regulation of river flow to create land for 250 peasants and settlers
Rhön mountains, near Meiningen	225 000	11	Cultivation of waste land and preparation of soil and opening up of country to create land for 300 peasants and settlers
Emsland, Lower Saxony	26 000	30	Cultivation of moor and waste land. Drainage and ditch work for creating land for 300 further settlers
Jura Mountains in Franconia	183 000	8	Construction of farm roads and improvement of soil to create land for 150 peasants
Danube near Straubing	17 300	6	Erection of dykes against Hoods and regulation of river flow to assist local peasants and settlers

The following example, taken from a report by Hermann Tholens, head of the planning section at the office of the Reich Labour Leader, illustrates in clearer detail the economic importance of the work which is being done.

Seven camps of the Labour Service, each embracing 150 men, have been put to work in the extreme northern part of the province of East Prussia, throughout the districts of Labiau and Niederung.

This territory is chiefly part of the Memel lowlands. It consists of very low-lying country, with broad expanses which are barely two feet above sea level and are traversed by a close net of water channels. In normal times the natural level of sub-soil water is found just below the surface level of the ground. When bad weather sets in, or when the wind drives the water back into the streams, this territory becomes flooded over large area. The many twists and turns in these streams are blocked by ice floes when thaw sets in during winter, with the result that the oncoming water is stemmed and overflows.

It is true that in a large section of this territory the farmers have for some time past formed their own drainage cooperative societies, but many of the drainage systems which they laid down have fallen into disrepair. In this territory we also find many estates and farms

which are entirely unprotected against the ravages of floods and sub-soil water. The farmers who are settled here have all penetrated into the lowlands in course of time. They cultivated the soil as best they could, without however being in a position to safeguard or protect their lands and homes against the danger of flooding. The high level which the sub-soil water reaches allows only rank grass to be grown and very frequently even this scanty crop is ruined in midsummer by flood water after rains. In many places flood water invades the homes during winter time. A part of these lowlands are bog land which is entirely uncultivated.

Three camps of the Labour Service groups employed here are each working in districts covering an approximate area of 2 500 to 7 000 acres. They are here not only for the purpose of erecting dykes and carrying out drainage work but are also employed in maintaining and reinforcing dykes already in existence or reconstructing those which have already fallen into disrepair. Four further camps are employed in the great marsh country. Their task is the construction of dykes and irrigation channels and the cultivation of land which has already been colonized. Formerly these parts used to be flooded periodically in and very often the settlers and their families had to take refuge on the attics of their houses. This newly reclaimed and cultivated and has been divided among 350 settlers and the lands which these settlers previously inhabited are re-allotted among those remaining behind. In this way each family of settlers will for the future receive sufficient arable land to meet its needs.

The political and economic value of this work can be estimated from the following: —

The total expenditure involved is approximately 1 500 000 Reichsmarks. The increased agricultural produce resulting directly from this work is officially valued at approx. 250 000 Reichsmarks, which in turn is equivalent to the average annual produce of 1800 acres of farm land. Therefore the nation gains a profit of 100 percent on this investment. The social benefits which have accrued from the undertaking are represented by the fact that whereas formerly 350 families of settlers were living under most deplorable conditions they are now assured of an ample livelihood on the land and are securely protected against the ravages of recurring floods.

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Foreign Visitors have come to see the Labour Camps

The origin of the Labour Service for young women has been almost as diverse and heterogeneous as that of the Labour Service for young men. Previous to 1933 certain groups of girls had banded themselves together for the purpose of agricultural work and afforestation, sundry farm work and housekeeping duties male labour camps. But there was a danger that this Labour Service would eventually become only a shelter for unemployed girls, or a welcome school for instructing the young people in the tenets of various denominational and political parties.

The Labour Service must educate also young girls in the community spirit and a spirit of comradeship, so that they may come to understand the high moral significance of work. The Reich Labour Leader has often stated that the male and female labour services should be looked upon as a uniform and homogeneous institution.

On April 1, 1936, the former autonomous organisation known as Woman's Labour Service was incorporated in the Reich Labour Service simultaneously detached from the Reich Labour Exchange and Unemployment Insurance Office, which latter institution had hitherto managed its finances. The administration of the Labour Service for young women is carried out by the Reich Directorate of the Labour Service through thirteen branch offices.

The Labour Service for young women is still on a voluntary basis; but arrangements for making it compulsory are already in progress. The German Students' Union has however made labour service a condition for all intending women students. No German young woman will be eligible for study at any university unless she has complied with this condition. The ages of girls in the Service range from 17 to 25 years. In the spring of 1937 there were 321 camps in being, with an average complement of 40 girls including their leaders. In the summer of 1937 the number had increased to 480 camps, with 15 000 girls at work, and in March 1938, over 600 camps will have been established for 30 000 girls.

The methods of education in the female Labour Service are decidedly different from those in the male service. The political and physical training of young men and women in both services is certainly along identical lines. The female service however avoids anything that might possess a soldierly character. For this reason the female service camps have a complement of only 10 girls. Discipline and community life in camp bear the stamp and character of home life. There is no drill and no commands are issued. The whole of the work done in the female labour service is directed towards maintaining and developing typical womanly characteristics. These young girls, having volunteered for six months service, are given as their principal duty the task of easing the burdens of overworked mothers in poorer families. In country districts and in distressed farm areas these girls assist women in their work in the house and on the land, or they help in looking after the children and attending to the sick. Camps have also been established near industrial areas to enable assistance to be given to wives and mothers of factory workers. The kindergartens attached to most of these camps have proved of particular value for children who are not yet of school age and who have to be taken care of in daytime nurseries.

The girls live in their own camps. Their work takes up from six to seven hours daily. During the afternoons they are occupied with physical training and receive lessons in the duties of citizenship. As in the case of the men, leisure hours are utilized for the purpose of developing the community spirit in each member and improving their general knowledge.



Nursing the Children whilst Mother is at work



Harvest Time

Each camp is in charge of a camp leader and three assistants. It is divided into three teams, each of which is in charge of a responsible girl. The leader must give an example of moral character and conduct as a loyal national socialist. She must also have an all-round expert knowledge of farm-dairying and domestic management, as well as a capacity for social training. Those who aspire to be camp leaders must first spend a year in the Labour Service and are then given leave of absence for two years, during which their practical training must be completed. This practical training can be gone through either at a rural college for women or as nursing sisters in hospitals. Practical training as kindergarten teachers, leaders in the Youth Movement, hospital or children’s nurses, housekeepers or teachers at agricultural colleges will also be recognised as a qualification for the position of camp leader. During her time of practical training the candidate for the position of Labour Service leader remains in touch with the competent office of the Labour Service for Women. But later on she is obliged to take a further course of six months at one of the district schools for women leaders attached to the Reich Labour Service. Although problems affecting the activities of women in the Labour Service differ from the problems which relate to the male service, yet the work done by both men and women in the camps is of incalculable value to the nation. This school will turn out a generation of young men and women for whom personal animosities and incompatibilities will have been removed through the close collaboration which they have enjoyed. This collaboration will help to bring about a spirit of mutual understanding among these young people. Thus national political training will be directed along the right channels.

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This training of our young folk in the duties towards the people, the nation and the State is the foremost purpose of the Labour Service. And this task is an internal question for Germany. The idea underlying the Labour Service has penetrated into other countries also. But the principles which inspire it and its shape, vary according to the conditions prevailing in those countries. Many thousands of foreign visitors have come to see our labour camps and have made acquaintance with our youth whose banner is the spade. These visitors have seen examples of the practical way in which this young generation have bridged the social clefts that threatened to disrupt our whole cultural life.

„Since the war”, says Norman Hillson in his book ‘I speak of Germany’, „we seem to have developed the idea that discipline can never be an effective servant of liberty. It is perhaps for that reason that the compulsory German labour camps have been bitterly condemned by critics who have never taken the trouble to go and see them at work. I have heard people say that the camps are akin to slave-grounds: that they are places of unmentionable vice: that in the barbed-wire compounds the German youth is deliberately deprived of his personality in order to make him suitable material for the conscript regular army.

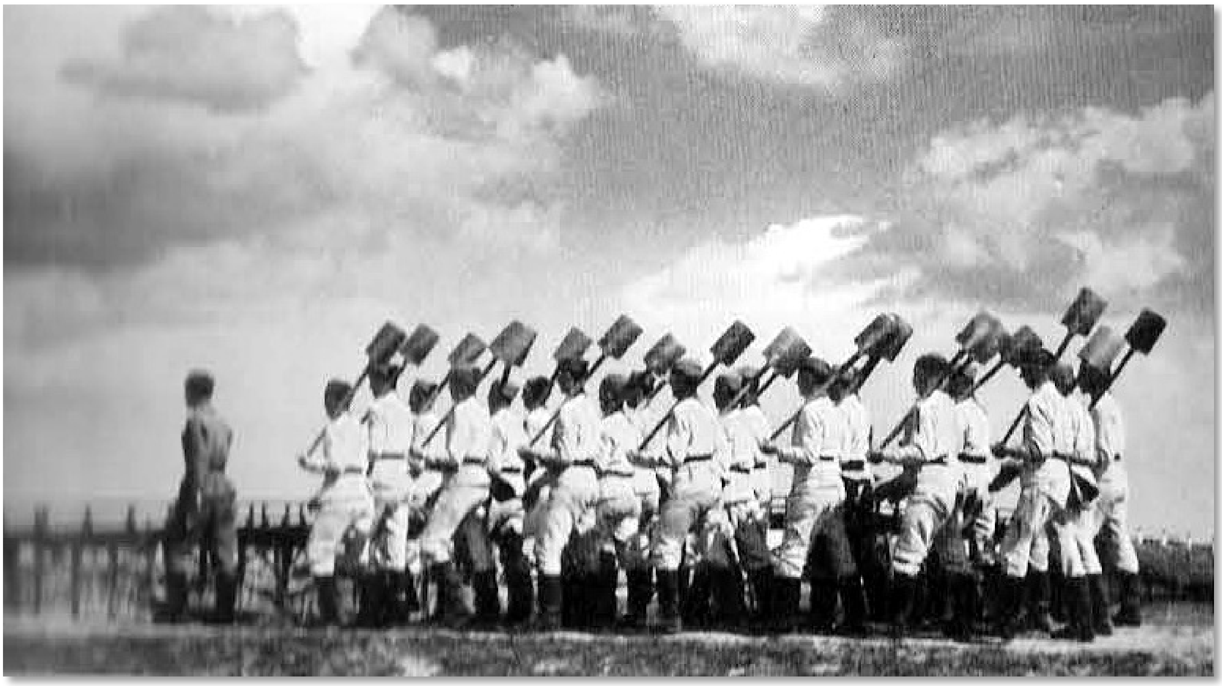
Such criticisms are very wide of the mark. The compulsory labour camps have now become an accepted part of the life of German youth. In the six months of hard work - hard work is not necessarily slavery - the boy of nineteen becomes strong and hardened - equipped physically for the increasing difficulties of life ahead.”

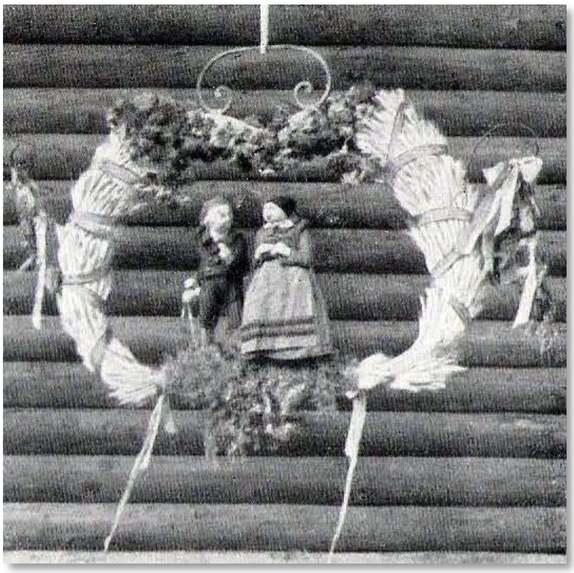
And Lord Mottistone writes in his book, published in Germany under the title „Auf der Suche nach der Wahrheit”:

„The Rules are exactly the same as those which are written up at Public Schools Camps in England. Many of them are identical with those inscribed in all Boy Scout Camps, especially those relating to cleanliness and health.

The enthusiasm for this particular idea of all ranks and classes serving together for six months or more is so great that the whole people of all ages are imbued with it. They realize that it is a great experiment, something quite new - not a five years plan, but a hundred years plan. It is not a system based on confiscation of past savings; but a plan to ensure that whilst every family retains what it has, and is encouraged to increase its wealth by every honourable means, all the boys, as they come to maturity, shall experience this period of complete equality in the service of the State.

It is indeed a most extraordinary Experiment. Nobody who has not witnessed it and studied it, as I have done in so many different parts of Germany, can realize the importance of the movement.”





Harvest - Home

The books quoted on page 30 and 31 are: Norman Hillson – „I speak of Germany“, Routledge, London 1937 and Lord Mottistone – „Auf der Such nach der Wahrheit“, Deutsche Verlagsanstalt Stuttgart und Berlin 1937

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